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*Harvest Gods of the Land Dyaks of Borneo.*—By Miss MARGARETTA MORRIS, Philadelphia, Pa.

THERE has been a growing demand in the past few years for detailed studies of religious customs and ideas in relation to the physical and economic environments in which they took shape; for a double purpose, to serve as tests of current theories of the development of religion, and at the same time as a basis for new generalizations.

This paper is part of an extended attempt to bring into systematic connection what can be known of the religion of the native tribes of British Borneo, and the full scientific knowledge that is available of local conditions. My present subject is an analysis of the invocation to the gods at the harvest festivals of one of the best known of these peoples, in the light of their present<sup>1</sup> circumstances and probable history.

The harvest festivals of the Land Dyaks are three in number, consisting of a celebration at the cutting of first fruits, a mid-harvest interlude, and a final great occasion after all the rice is stored. They differ only in extent and in minor ritual from preceding rites, which occur at intervals through the whole farming season. And all these are in broad outlines similar to numerous religious feasts which mark every tribal event of any importance. In fact the Dyaks are much given to feasting, and it is their habit to accord a religious interpretation to each fes-

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<sup>1</sup> The word "present" is here used in an extended sense. To be more exact, I should say the middle of the nineteenth century, for the most copious and valuable authorities on the Land Dyaks wrote from experiences among them during the period from 1835-1860. The best information about these tribes is to be gathered from the journals of Sir James Brooke and his associates, whose remarkable rule opened up the country of the Land and Sea Dyaks at this time, and attracted the attention of the civilized world to the native peoples of Borneo. It would be interesting to compare these records with recent observations to trace the effect of English influence. But later writers have concerned themselves more with other tribes. Judging from the rapidity with which political changes of 1895 were embodied in Dyak religion, their customs must have altered materially by this time.

tivity. The chief differences in these celebrations are in the dances and symbolic pageants appropriate to each occasion, and in the gods in whose honor the feast is supposed to be held.<sup>1</sup>

At the harvest feasts, Mr. Chalmers tells us, the Land Dyaks invoke the presence of "all the powers of the spiritual, the natural, and the human worlds of which they know or have heard." The harvest celebration is indeed the culminating assemblage of gods as well as mortals. For lesser occasions only a single spirit or group of spirits is invoked. But at the great stated agricultural feasts it is more than one group when "Tuppa or Jerroang is always invoked . . . and together with the sun, moon, and stars, and the Sultan of Bruni, and their own rajah, are requested to shed their beneficent influence over the seed paddy, and to render the season propitious to its growth." They are thus addressed, according to the formula which the elder repeats while scattering rice from the doorway of the house:—"Away with you, rice. Cause me to approach acceptably . . . to request a blessing of the Tuan Patik (or Sultan) of Bruni, of the rajah of Sarawak, the rajah of the stars, the rajah of the moon, the rajah of the seven stars; to ask for paddy, to ask for rice, to beg for the blessing of our lord Jang-Tupa."<sup>2</sup>

Truly we have here a motley company; Tuppa, the highest in conception and most godlike of their gods, a Malay and an English potentate, and the sun, moon and stars. Small wonder that Chalmers characterized the assemblage as consisting of all the powers they knew of in different worlds.

In saying all, he has apparently overlooked for the moment spirits of whom he speaks elsewhere, certain formidable unin-  
vited guests, who could not be welcomed at this time because of the essential abhorrence of their natures to the beneficent powers invoked. Chief of these are the *Triu*, mountain-dwelling

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Spencer St. John, *Life in the Forests of the Far East* (2d edition), i, pp. 170, 175, 185, 190-197, 219, 230; Chambers, Grant, and Denison, quoted by Roth, *Natives of Sarawaki*, p. 392; Sir Hugh Low, *Sarawak, its Inhabitants and its Productions*, pp. 251, 254; Rev. Wm. Chalmers, in Grant's *Tour*, pp. 106-125, quoted by Roth, i. pp. 411-414; Keppel, *Expedition to Borneo of H. M. S. Dido* (American ed. of 1846), p. 233; Sir James Brooke in *ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. Wm. Chalmers, quoted by Roth, i, p. 216; Low, p. 251. The forms Tuppa, Tupa, Tapa, occur, the first reproducing the pronunciation (*u* as in *but*).

war-gods, the martial genii of the Dyaks who lead them on to victory, and the horrific *Kamang*, shaggy like ourang-outangs, malevolent and cruel, who mingle in battle to increase the carnage, and whose favorite food is human blood. It is true that the presence of these is desired sometimes, when traps are set in the jungle to catch deer and pigs, and at the head-feast following battle. But to the peaceful agricultural feast they must not come. For were they present the more powerful Tuppa would not attend, "since his more pure and beneficent nature looks upon war with horror and disgust."<sup>1</sup>

It is not then a gathering of all the gods that marks the great feasts of the year, but an assemblage of the higher, beneficent, peaceful powers.

Furthermore, a closer examination of the invited deities shows through their apparent diversity a common connection with farm interests.

For example, the star worship belongs to determination of planting time by the position of the Pleiades. This is the story they tell of Sakarra,<sup>2</sup> the rajah of the stars, who with his followers lives in the country of the seven-chained-stars. Once some Dyaks who went sailing out to sea were blown to a whirlpool, in the midst of which a *sibau* tree was growing up out of the water. One of them climbed up into the branches to gather fruit, and when he looked down for his companions they were nowhere to be found. What should he do? He could not go down into the sea; there was no alternative but to climb up farther. So he climbed, and at the top came to the Pleiades, a country like the Dyak country, from which he could look down through a jar with a hole in the bottom and see the people in his own village moving about their daily occupations. Sakarra, the rajah of that country, entertained him well, and gave him a queer-looking white thing to eat, which he said was rice. He then told the Dyak how to plant, reap, and cook it, told him the use of bird cries for omens, and how to cut the jungle for planting. Finally he gave him seeds for the three kinds of rice they now cultivate, and let him down by a long rope to his own village. From that time the Dyaks followed his instructions.

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<sup>1</sup> Chalmers, quoted by Roth, i, pp. 166, 216; Low, pp. 250, 254.

<sup>2</sup> Another name for the Pleiades, Low, p. 251.

"Hence they know that when in the early morning before sunrise the seven stars are low in the eastern sky, then it is time to cut down the jungle; when they appear in mid-heaven at the same time then they burn, and when they are seen declining toward the west they plant. Again, when, in early evening they are seen thus declining, then they are at liberty to bring their harvest treasures home, without fear of any ill-luck attending their joyful labours."<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to note in this story the going to sea as the preliminary to learning agriculture. It is suggestive of what seems historically more than probable, that rice and the art of cultivating it were brought to the Dyaks from abroad. A legendary tale, where all history is tradition and imagination runs riot like the wild jungle growths, would quickly grow up about the origin of farming, embodying in the tangle of fancy a hint of facts; and it would naturally connect itself with the stars, whose movements are closely watched at every stage.

The reason for prayer to the sun at the festival of ripe grain is too evident to need discussion. For this form of nature-worship is thoroughly familiar from its prevalence among all legend-making folks who need the sun's genial warmth for their growing things.

As for the moon, it seems in some way to be connected with the fortunes of their farms, but just how does not appear. At certain phases of the moon they stop work for a day, namely at full moon and the third day after it; in some tribes at new and full moon, and at the first and third quarters. Explanations might easily be imagined for this. But without confirming facts it seems wiser to suspend judgment on this point than to speculate.<sup>2</sup>

To be understood, the two human rulers associated in this invocation with the gods must be divested of the matter-of-fact relationships in which they appear to the outside observer. The Dyak sees them in an atmosphere of remoteness, mystery, and irresistible power over him for weal or woe. His former ruler, the Sultan of Bruni, he has never seen. Far off to the northward lives the Sultan, in the center of a magnificent court, the

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<sup>1</sup> St. John, i, pp. 213-214; Chalmers, quoted by Roth, i, pp. 307-308; Brooke, in Keppel, p. 328.

<sup>2</sup> Chalmers, quoted by Roth, i, p. 401.

fame of which, highly colored, reaches the outskirts of the realm. Every year the Sultan's emissaries demanded tribute of grain and forced trade of rice for ornaments and Malay manufactures. Any delinquencies or shortage of rice were punished by swift and sure vengeance in the form of attacks by the powerful Sea Dyak pirate forces under Malay direction. The Sultan belonged to a race far superior in intellect to the Dyaks. It was easy for the latter to endow this incomprehensibly powerful being, for whom most of their rice was cultivated, with supernatural influence over the productivity of their fields.

If the Sultan of Bruni had an awe-inspiring influence over welfare, and was heartily dreaded, rajah Brooke had a no less marvelous effect upon their lives and was correspondingly adored. From the very first, Sir James Brooke's policy was to protect the weaker tribes against the ravages of their warlike neighbors. The Land Dyaks, with attractive wealth of grain for plunder, with a position on isolated hills, which made it impossible for different tribes to coöperate in defence, had been constant victims. Their houses and granaries were plundered, their standing crops burned, their men killed, and their women and children carried off into slavery. In the ten years preceding Sir James Brooke's control, the majority of Land Dyak tribes had been reduced in numbers about one half, and the survivors were in a pitiful condition. Protected by his rule, they rebuilt their houses and planted their farms and fruit trees, without fear of attack; under the ensured peaceful conditions they found enlarged markets for their produce, and trade in rice, which had been oppressive, became a source of wealth. There was every incentive to increased agricultural activity. No wonder that they came to regard this white-faced stranger, coming out of the unknown in a huge smoking boat that miraculously sped up the rivers without oars, as a beneficent god.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Roth, *Introd.* p. xx; St. John, i, p. 151; Low, pp. 247, 292; Brooke in Mundy, i, pp. 188, 313. Sir James Brooke computed the decrease in numbers among the Land Dyak tribes under ten years of Malay rule, by comparison of official Malay records with his own observations. The striking results are given by Keppel, p. 341. One of the tribes had been reduced from 330 to 50 families. As a matter of fact, probably very little of the rice that was demanded as tribute and in forced trade ever reached the Sultan or got beyond the possession of the rapacious petty officials. But it was demanded in his name.

Whenever he entered a village they brought him paddy seed, and begged him to sprinkle it by dipping the women's necklaces into a mixture, in order to make the seed very productive. And the women bathed his feet, first with water, then with cocoanut milk, and then with water again, which magic fluids they afterwards carefully preserved and distributed over the farms to make them fertile. Tribes too far off for him to visit sent a piece of cloth of gold or silver, which when returned they buried in their fields to make them yield plentifully. And when the crops of the Sambas tribe failed, the chief declared that it was because the rajah had never visited them. The new sovereign whose rule had given such impetus to successful cultivation came to be regarded as a deity whose mere touch insured growth and health. Hence he was most appropriately invoked to the harvest feasts.<sup>1</sup>

There remains to be considered the god Tuppa, most interesting of these farm patrons, most complex in origin, and most indefinite in conception. It would be impossible for me to go into an adequate discussion here of the exact attributes of this deity, even so far as they can be determined by comparison of the several accounts given by careful investigators. It would be still more futile for me to attempt to unravel in a few paragraphs the probable development through which the idea of the god Tuppa attained its final form. But a few words about the nature and antecedents of this chief figure of the occasion are indispensable to an analysis of the harvest invocation.

Tuppa is the greatest of the rajahs of the spiritual world. To the Dyaks the jungle is full of the ghosts of dead men and other spirits greater than these, but all alike malevolent. They must be propitiated, for they delight in mischief and misdeeds. But spirits as well as mortals are in subservience to the higher beneficent powers who created them and all mankind. Chalmers distinguishes four such beings: Tupa, who "created mankind and everything that draws the breath of life, and daily preserves them by his power and goodness;" Tenubi, who made the earth and all that grows on it, and gives seed and bread; Jang, who founded and instructed the order of priestesses and

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<sup>1</sup> St. John, i, p. 193; Low, pp. 224, 247, 259.

makes their medicine effectual for men and crops; and Jirong, who presides over birth and death.<sup>1</sup>

But I find Tuppa elsewhere accredited with each of the functions of Tenubi, Jang, and Jirong. Tuppa is spoken of as the creator not only of men and beasts, but of all things, and more often than Tenubi is called the giver of seed. Like Jang, he is supposed to have taught the art of planting padi, and he is patron of the priestesses in that they claim power from having visited his house in dreams. And to Tuppa rather than Jirong is addressed a prayer for many children. Tuppa is also constantly identified with one or another of these three. "A very intelligent man of the tribe of Sitang" told Chalmers that Tuppa and Tenubi were only different names for the same great being. Low speaks of an invocation to "Tuppa or Jerroang" as if the two were synonymous. While St. John says that "'*Jang*' is frequently associated with '*Tapa*,' and '*Tapa-Jang*' often stands for the supreme being."<sup>2</sup>

It seems to me highly probable that we have here a god in the making, a unified deity just developing out of separate concepts. Such unification is by no means rare when advancing intellectual development shows the activities formerly attributed to separate deities to be closely interrelated. Or it may be in this case that the various tribes, while scattered and isolated, gave local names to the chief god of the pantheon; and later, when the impetus of trade gave more communication, they began to identify their separate divinities with the chief god of the most powerful and numerous tribes.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In Houghton, *Memoirs of the Anthropological Society*, iii. p. 199; A. C. Haddon, *Head Hunters, Black, White, and Brown*, p. 340; St. John, i, pp. 174, 181; Low, pp. 249-253; Chalmers, in Grant's *Tour*, quoted by Roth, i, pp. 165-167, 260. The account given by Réville, *Religions des Peuples Non-Civilisés*, ii, p. 161, is so close even in wording to Chalmers's that I should suppose it taken from the latter.

<sup>2</sup> Chalmers, in Grant's *Tour*, quoted by Roth, i, p. 165; St. John, pp. 180, 199; Low, p. 273; Denison (quoted by Roth, i, p. 217) gives an invocation which begins thus, "O Tapa, who is Yang the Preserver, who is Jirong-Brama, the creator."

<sup>3</sup> Low, p. 249, says that in many villages the name of the chief god is Tuppa, in others Jerroang has the preference. There is another god whose name they will give to interrogators, Jowata. But this is undoubtedly an importation, something they have heard of from the foreign coast peoples, and Jowata to nearly all the tribes has remained a mere name. Jowata is only prayed to by a few who have come into close contact with the Malays. Cf. Brooke in Keppel, pp. 194, 328; *ibid.* in Mundy, i, p. 335, also 201-205.



Whatever may be the true history, so much at least is certain,—that Tuppa, whether alone or in connection with Tenubi, Jirong, or Jang, has always the following qualities: (1) He has a pure and beneficent nature and loves to do good to mankind; (2) he is patron of the peaceful arts and hates strife and warfare, hence he is always invoked at the agricultural feasts and never before or after battle; (3) he is the most powerful of the gods, to whom all evil spirits are subordinated; (4) he is not, like the latter, to be found wandering in the jungle or embodied in animals or individual objects, but together with a few other uncreated beings he lives in heaven; (5) the gentle rain which falls from the sky for the health and growth of the rice is his token of favor, thunder is his anger: (6) it is he who sends the soul of the rice from heaven at the harvest feast each year.<sup>1</sup>

These qualities are enough to show immediately that the conception of Tuppa has grown out of the experiences of agriculture. First his patronage of this chief of the peaceful arts and his miraculous giving the “soul of the rice” stamps at the very outset his place in their life. Then his hatred of war is a reflection of the incompatibility of the occupations of planting and plundering; peace and settled life are good for the farms, so the god of farm-life consistently hates fierce rovers. He is the most powerful of the gods because rice-growing has come to be their principal occupation and source of wealth;<sup>2</sup> it has superseded the older pursuits of hunting, trapping and fishing, which are now altogether subsidiary. With their decline the multitudinous jungle spirits, worshipped by Land Dyaks in common with all other trappers and fishers of Borneo, have been subordinated to the new deities.

The spirits residing in trees, the spirits of earth and water, and of the lower air, as well as the ghosts of dead men, are

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<sup>1</sup> Cf., besides references noted above, Brooke in Mundy, i, p. 199; Chalmers, quoted by Roth, i, p. 413.

<sup>2</sup> In some Land Dyak tribes the cultivation of fruit trees is of almost equal importance with that of rice, in a very few cases even greater. All the Land Dyak tribes plant cocoanut and durian trees about their villages. Some have a second crop of garden-vegetables after the rice is harvested. But rice is in general the staple. Cf. St. John, i, pp. 147, 202; Low, pp. 282-284; Denison, quoted by Roth, i, p. 407; Houghton, M.S.S., iii, p. 197.

regarded as malicious causes of misfortune and illness who must be propitiated by offerings, or driven away by gong-beating and incantations; while Tuppa and his associates are all kindly disposed.<sup>1</sup> Two reasons may be assigned for this habit of attributing everything that goes wrong to the gods of the wild jungle life, and all good things to the patrons of agriculture. In the first place, it is but a reflection of their bettered fortunes from the life of hunting and fighting (so full of terror and accident that the spirits were already supposed to be for the most part malevolent) to the new comfort and welfare that came with an abundant supply of rice, and was naturally accredited to a god who wished them well. In the second place, the character of Tuppa is a projection of the change in their own natures from the ferocity and cunning developed in the jungle to the honesty, thrift, and peaceful coöperation cultivated in accordance with the needs of successful agriculture.

The patron of rice-culture, from the nature of that occupation, came to be regarded as benevolent; from its importance, as chief among the gods. How shall we account for the further extension of Tuppa's influence, beyond the mere needs of the farms, to care of the Dyak's welfare of many kinds?

The enlarging of the scope of a deity that comes with the development of agriculture has been recognized by Mr. Jevons in his general religious theories. He turns to syncretism to account for it, that is in this connection, the fusion of worship of several clans which have settled down together for agricultural life. According to Mr. Jevons, the bringing together in larger communities of small clans having different gods would result in the conception of larger gods uniting the characteristics of the lesser ones. It is a perfectly logical explanation. Is it historically accurate?

Let us test it by our analysis of the god Tuppa. Tuppa, as we have seen, is often associated with Jirong, Jang and Tenubi, and has even come to be accredited with their prerogatives. This would seem to be in line with Mr. Jevons's theory. But Jirong, Jang, and Tenubi, be it remembered, are like Tuppa himself, great rajahs of the spiritual world placed above the jungle spirits. They are no early lesser clan gods, but them-

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. references given above for pp. 171 and 172.

selves outgrowths of the broader life. Two of them at least are distinctly agricultural; Tenubi, who made the earth and all that grows on it, and is especially the giver of seed and bread; and Jang, who instructed the priestesses in caring for the rice. On the other hand, the relationship of Tuppa to the pre-agricultural gods, who still remain as subservient members of the pantheon, is not that of absorption, but of unmitigated hostility. And the character of Tuppa, far from being a combination of the qualities of forest spirits, is something entirely new, growing out of the new manner of life.<sup>1</sup>

This life in itself is sufficient to lead to the concept of a god of varied power. If the beginning of rice-culture affected the Dyaks' character, it had no less influence upon their intellectual insight. Where before they had only to consider the day's wants, and to acquire a certain ingenuity of pursuit; now they must plan for results months ahead, and must calculate upon many conditions of soil, seed and weather, to bring about a single desired result. Thus they came to consider not only things, but forces. They began to see the interrelation of distant events. And with the widening of their mental horizon there was produced a wider conception of deity. The harvest god could not be embodied in a single object. He who controlled all these complex forces of nature must be far removed from the actual world. The sky was thought to be his dwelling place, because from thence came down the gentle rain and sunlight that prospered the crops, the thunderstorm that destroyed. Having thus exalted Tuppa and believing him to have power

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<sup>1</sup> Jevons, *Introduction to the history of Religion*, Ch. xviii. When this syncretism did not take place, Mr. Jevons goes on to say, the gods remained together and polytheism arose. Polytheism is undoubtedly characteristic of the Dyak religion, whether we are willing to attribute it to a fusing of tribes or not. For my own part I am more inclined to regard it in this case as the result of superimposing new activities upon old modes of life not yet supplanted. The patron gods of different pursuits are formed into a pantheon, taking rank according to the relative importance of the interests they represent. But supposing Mr. Jevons's suggestion to be correct, that polytheism resulted from the settling together for agricultural purposes of several tribes whose patron deities did not fuse, we have not accounted under these conditions for the enlarging of a single god's province which is characteristic of agriculture.

over all the multiform conditions that determined the success of their labors, it was easy to extend his domain and pray to him, as they do, for increase of children, for abundance of wild pigs and fruits, and nests full of honey in the tapang trees.<sup>1</sup>

Such, briefly, are some of the antecedents of the chief god of the feast. He is seen to be an idealization of their main source of wealth; his nature, in so far as it differs from that of the denizens of the more primitive spirit world, being determined by the peaceful and prosperous conditions of settled life, the character-development it produced, and the increased intellectual ability.

The greatest god is invoked to the greatest feasts. Yet less, I think, because of his exalted position, than because, being distinctively in his character, scope, and functions, the outgrowth of farming, he is the most appropriate guest at a harvest sacrifice. And the rajahs who join with Tuppa in blessing the fields, the rajahs of the sun, moon, and stars, and the two human potentates, are beings that have been accredited with supernatural influence over the rice, because the Dyak has felt the power of their natural activities, for good or evil, in his agricultural pursuits.

The result of our analysis is then briefly this:—that the Land Dyaks invoke to their harvest feasts the gods that are the emanation of their experiences in farm life, also those powers of man and nature whose effect upon the fortune of the farms has led to their exaltation in mystical reverence.

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<sup>1</sup> Brooke in Mundy, i, p. 199; Chalmers, quoted by Roth, i, p. 216; Low, pp. 314–316.